DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 097 806 FL 006 544

AUTHOR Pallis, Guadalupe Valdes
TITLE Teaching Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking: Classroom Strategies.
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Language Instruction; Language Patterns; Mexican Americans; *Native Speakers; Reading Instruction; *Regional Dialects; *Spanish; *Spanish Speaking; Speech Habits; Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Techniques; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

Students of Spanish in the United States who are native speakers of Spanish need courses designed to meet their special linguistic needs. The tendency has been for teachers to place negative value judgments on the Spanish dialects spoken by Mexican-Americans. Instead, courses should be based on the areas in which the native Spanish speaker needs instruction in his own dialect. The classroom strategies described here have been found effective and can be used during one semester. The Spanish-speaking student consistently speaks more than he writes, and consequently writes as he speaks. In order to compensate for spoken dialect irregularities, he needs to learn spelling rules. Many spelling irregularities can be corrected, to a large extent, by teaching Spanish sound and symbol correspondences. By using a chart listing Spanish phonemes, and the most common mistakes made by the Spanish-speaking student who already reads and writes English, the student is introduced to Spanish consonants, vowels, and vowel diphthongs with the corresponding orthographic symbols. Students also must be given a complete explanation of stress in Spanish. In teaching reading, the objectives must be that the student acquire: (1) ease and confidence in his ability to read Spanish and (2) comprehension closely approximating his comprehension in English. Emphasis should be given in reading to understanding meaning in context without English translation. (LG)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TEACHING SPANISH TO THE SPANISH-SPEAKING: CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Guadalupe Valdés Fallis

Department of Foreign Languages

New Mexico State University

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPY
RIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Guadalupe Valdés Fallis
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING
UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL IN
STITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRO
DUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM RE
QUIRES PERMISSION OF THE ~~COPYRIGHT~~
OWNER

ED 097806

In the United States, Spanish is taught in departments of foreign languages as a foreign language. This is very much in spite of the fact that the 1970 census listed more than 5,662,700 native speakers of Spanish living in five southwestern states: New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and California. Until very recently no attempt was made to separate students who were already fluent in the language from students who were beginning the study of Spanish for the first time. The assumption was that Mexican Americans who spoke Spanish would profit from dialogue repetition and audiolingual drills specifically designed for non-speakers. It mattered not that the native speaker was often bored and impatient repeating constructions which he already knew well. Teachers were convinced that any Spanish such students knew was "bad" or "low" Spanish and better forgotten. In class the student was supposed to begin again the "right" way with the "right" sort of Spanish by memorizing endless rules for *ser* and *estar*, the imperfect vs. the preterite, *saber* and *conocer*, etc.; all items which are as much of a problem to these speakers as is the use of *make* and *do* for the native speaker of English.

FL006544

That such theories were at best naive has been evident for some time. Now, most universities in the Southwest carefully separate native and non-native speakers of Spanish and often a Spanish-speaking student who elects to take a beginning course in Spanish, designed for non-speakers, cannot receive credit for such study.

Unfortunately this separation has not solved the problem. For at this point, while the students are no longer forced to re-learn their Spanish by repeating simple dialogues and conjugating verbs, they are still subjected to the same negative prejudices and value judgments concerning their dialect. The tendency now is simply to give the student rules and examples of all the lexical and grammatical items that he "misuses" so that he can in fact learn standard Spanish. Indeed the only two textbooks designed for native speakers of the language in the United States: Español para los hispanos(1966) and Español para el bilingue(1972) include such rules as "hay que evitar por lo general todos los pachuquismos o expresiones vulgares a fin de que ustedes lleguen a ser personas bien estimadas por su modo de hablar y también para que se conserve la belleza del español" (Baker,1966). And "Cuidado de no comerse la ll. Se dice a/ni/llo. No se dice a/ní/o." (Barker, 1972).

The absurdity of such an approach has been most effectively pointed out by Donald Bowen, a longtime student of Southwestern Spanish, in his article: "Local Standards and Spanish in the Southwest (1972). While Mr. Bowen agrees that the Spanish spoken

as a vernacular in the United States is considered substandard by educated Spanish Americans from other regions, he does not feel that it is so distant from other varieties that adjustment will be difficult for a self-assured hispano. Just as Puerto Ricans and Argetinians are understood and adjust to the Spanish of other regions (though their dialects are not optimally rated in the Spanish-speaking world) so too will the speaker of Southwestern Spanish.

Stressing the fact that speakers of this dialect have no reason to try to sound like they come from Madrid or Mexico city, Mr Bowen further states that Spanish must be taught in this area as a second dialect. Students, he adds, must be encouraged not to denigrate or reject the language of their parents. Mexican American Spanish should be accepted and misguided efforts to change it abandoned. It is, he concludes, a historically authentic version of Spanish and an important part of the linguistic patrimony of the Southwest.

Nevertheless, in spite of such enlightened discussions, in spite of the many statements from linguists that teachers not place value judgments on dialects; old prejudices die slowly. The prescriptive approach to language teaching is still very much with us.

The question then for those of us who feel that we are no longer justified in taking the student's time for a semester simply to teach him a list of do's and don'ts and foreign language equivalents is" What to teach? Or does one need to teach at all?

To answer these questions, the needs of the Spanish speaking students must be clearly defined as well as our own ability to fill these needs as teachers of the language. This paper has then as its purpose the examination of the areas in which the native speaker is deficient in his own dialect and the presentation of various classroom strategies which have been tested and found effective.

When we speak of the Spanish-speaking student, we usually mean precisely that; a student who may or may not be Spanish surnamed, but who can understand spoken Spanish and can communicate in the language well beyond simply making himself understood. Usually this student can carry on conversations in Spanish on a limited number of subjects although he often feels the need to switch into English. At the very worst we may be dealing with a "passive" bilingual who, while he understands Spanish quite well, cannot or dares not speak the language. Essentially then, we are speaking of a student who already possesses two skills; speaking and understanding. Given that fact, we can perhaps be justified in viewing the two other skills: reading and writing as the most imporant areas in which this student must acquire skills if he is to become a literate bilingual. Here we will concern ourselves specifically with the teaching of these two skills.

The Teaching of Writing

As opposed to the non-Spanish-speaking student, the Spanish-English bilingual generally knows a great many more words in Spanish than

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

he has ever seen written. All too often when he attempts to write in this language what he can already say, what he produces bears little or no resemblance to Spanish at all. For him then, the problem is not so much the teaching of composition but the teaching of spelling.

Briefly, spelling irregularities can be classified as follows:

1.) errors caused by the interference of English spelling conventions
2.) writing of incomplete forms (taba, lo vía visto, etc.)
3.) correctly spelled forms which seem unusual to the reader accustomed to Standard Spanish (estábanos, awela, puedemos, etc.)

In this paper we will be concerned strictly with irregularities of the first type.

Basically, all such irregularities are predictable and can be corrected significantly by the teaching of sound and orthographic symbol correspondances in Spanish. I have developed a chart of the Spanish consonant phonemes and selected allophones as well as the most common mistakes made by the Spanish-speaking student who already reads and writes in English. Using such a chart, bilingual students have been introduced to almost all possible Spanish sounds and the necessary letter symbols required for each sound. Here we will mention a number of techniques which can be used profitably during one semester.

I. The Introduction of the Vowel Phonemes

During the first week of class, the students are shown how all Spanish vowels will have only one sound each time that they appear. It must be pointed out that while English may use the grapheme a for the sound [a] in father, [ey] in cake, [ae] in cat, and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[ə] in alone, etc., Spanish will always give the sound [a] to the grapheme a. Extensive drills may be necessary for those students who have trouble with the sound [i] in Spanish. At the beginning many students will spell such words as piso and mina as "peeso" and "meena."

It is important at this stage that words with diphthongs be excluded entirely and that the student be given simple sentences to write or rewrite which limit his use of vocabulary to words which contain simple vowels.

II. Vowel Combinations: The Sounds of the Spanish Diphthongs

As a next step, the student is introduced to the entire concept of diphthongs in Spanish. At the beginning, the student may be unable to distinguish between a simple vowel sound and a vowel combination. Because of the slighter value of the sounds [i] and [u], the student often writes and hears a common word such as tiene as tene.

In the introductory lesson, the student should be given the common definition of a Spanish diphthong: a diphthong is any combination of the weak vowels "u" and "i" with the strong vowels "a", "e" and "o", or with each other. The possible variations of the strong and weak vowels in combination should then be listed on the board for the students and examples given for each sound using common words. These diphthongs should be pronounced so that the student is aware of the difference between a simple vowel and a diphthong combination, for example, the sound of a by itself vs. the sound in the words estudia and jaula. The student can then be asked to identify

diphthongs in written words from lists including items such as leon, cruel, leer, piensa, duerme, etc., and to produce words containing a specific diphthong sound. At a later stage,it can be pointed out that an accent mark on a weak vowel breaks the diphthong and creates two separate vowel sounds. He can then be asked to pronounce long series of words such as María, Fausto, Raúl, país, diez, veinte, etc, and point out which words have a diphthong sound. Daily dictation exercises are recommended using words with and without diphthongs.

III. The Consonant Phonemes

After the student has throughly mastered the above areas, he must be drilled on the Spanish consonants. Essentially, he should be introduced to one sound, or at most two, per class session. The phonetic symbol is written on the board prominently and the sound is pronounced clearly. Students are then asked to think of words which have that sound. Such words are then written on the board in order to show the appropriate letter symbol(s) for spelling the sound in question. The student is given,then, the sound, its phonetic symbol, and the orthographical representation(s) of the sound at one time. He is then drilled by means of dictations, controlled compositions, etc. The point of each drill must be the following: the student must become aware of the fact that when he wants to write a word in Spanish, he can sound it out. He must only be aware of the number of possible letter symbols for each sound present in the word.

With many sounds, the student will have little or no problem. In fact, he may have already leanred most of them as he drilled on both simple vowels and diphthongs. Nevertheless, a partical list of principal problems might include.

	Phoneme	Written symbol	Examples
1.	/k/	c, qu, k	casa, Cuca, cosa kilo, kepi queso, quinto

It will be important to point out the following:

a. The only possible spellings for the sounds [ke] and [ki] are "que" and "qui".

b. K will be overused. It must be pointed out that it is used rarely in Spanish and that all other possibilities should be considered before using K.

c. There will be a tendency toward the use of Q in such words as cuatro and cuando. It should be made clear that the only possible combinations using Q are "que" and "qui".

d. Since U after C is not silent, words with the sound of [buske] must be spelled busque and not buscue.

2.	/b/	b or v	tuvo, tubo

The student must be made aware of the fact that he must not expect to hear the sound [v] in order to use the written symbol V. Because of the natural difficulty in this area, much drill will be necessary.

3.	/g/	g(+a, +o, +u) gu (+e, +i)	gasto, goma, gusto Guillermo, sigue

The student must be made to see that while English will spell the sounds [gi] and [ge] as in give and get, Spanish must spell the same sounds: gui and gue, e.g. guinda, guerra.

4.	/x/	j (before all vowels) g (+e, +i)	joven, jarra, jura mujer, jirafa gente, página

Drills involving the phoneme /x/ before the sounds [e] and [i] will be especially helpful here. Indeed the student must be shown that this is one of the areas in which sound by itself is not an exact clue as to the spelling of a particular word. He must rely on memory as well.

Very obviously, some phonemes will present definite problems and others will not. No drill will be necessary with the sounds and symbols of "m" and 'n", for example; but some students will need to drill to drill on the sound [ñ] so that they will write señor and not senior, año, and not anio, or anyo. Some students will not have trouble identifying the sound of [r̃], as opposed to [r] , and others will. Some will in fact hear intervocalic [r] as the sound represented by English "dd" in caddy or ladder and thus will spell [kara] : cada.

Attention must also be devoted to the written symbol "h". Most students need extensive practice in writing words such as hasta, ahora, hoy, huevo, hielo, zanahoria, etc., and indeed the old-fashioned English spelling drills and tests are most effective here. The student must understand that, in Spanish, he must depend on both his memory and sound.

IV Stress and Written Accent

The student must be given a complete explanation of stress in Spanish. He must be shown that all words in Spanish are stressed according to definite rules. He can begin by learning all of the rules for syllabication. He can practice dividing words and marking the syllable on which the stress falls: ce re bro , jue ves, som bre ro. Since the rules for syllabication are simple and only a little different, most students will have no trouble. The greatest problem will be in hearing which syllable is being stressed. At the beginning, of course, no accented words should be introduced.

When the student feels fairly confident in doing the above, he can be taught to classify words as either agudas, graves, or esdrujulas.

For example:

ca pi tal	aguda	word stressed on final syllable
gen te	grave	word stressed on next to last syllable
te lé fo no	esdrújula	word stressed on a syllable other than last or next to last

Only when he has throughly mastered this, should written accents be presented. They will be simple at this point because the student upon hearing a word, for example, árbol, can spell, syllabicate, mark the stressed syllable, and classify the word. He will easily apply the rule: Las palabras graves llevan acento ortográfico si terminan en consonante menos "n" o "s". The three rules are generally learned very rapidly and at this point students need only to be taught to accent for purposes of differentiation and diphthong dissolution.

Constant practice in writing is essential. It cannot be neglected for even a day. The student must continue to drill on the sounds he has learned with attention to areas in which memorization is essential: b vs v, ll vs y, j vs. g, s vs ce and ci, and z. At the end of the semester he will have achieved some confidence in his ability to write in Spanish in such a way that he can be understood by a native.

The Teaching of Reading

The principal objective in the teaching of reading must be: that the student acquire ease and confidence in his ability to read Spanish,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

and that his comprehension of this written material closely approximate his comprehension of written English. Realistically such an objective will probably not be achieved by the majority of the students in one semester. But to direct the student toward any objective but this is do do him a grave disservice. As we well know, a permanent reading skill in any language is the key not only to ideas, beauty, meaning, and greater vocabulary, but essentially to the retention of the language itself. To sacrifice such an objective for the dubious benefit of changing the student's traiba for traía is not only sociolinguistically naive, but perhaps in some cases criminal.

At the first level, reading is simply the learning of sound and letter correspondence. Initially the student may misread even familiar words and fail to understand them. If he assumes that leer, for example, is pronounced [lir], he will not understand what it means. Obviously then, the sound and symbol explanations which make up at least half of the class time will be important aids in this deciphering process.

Perhaps the most important pitfall to avoid is that of translation. At first the student will not seek to understand the meaning of a sentence or paragraph directly, but will attempt to translate what he reads into English. The teacher must be particularly observant and insist that the student simply read for meaning...or for plot. He must not be concerned with understanding each word and looking up great masses of items in English-Spanish glossaries. What he must learn to do, as he has in English, is to guess intelligently at

those words he does not know within the context in which they are found.

Again, the student must reminded that reading aloud is a special skill and one that takes practice. If he himself desires to build up such a skill, certainly he should; but he must not confuse reading aloud and sounding "good" with understanding what he reads. Comprehension must be continually stressed as being the most important goal.

The student cannot be made to read too much. He should have a daily reading assignment during the entire semester and frequent in-class reading tasks. Materials can include everything available, from the Espasa-Calpe Encyclopedia to the traditional second-year readers. Indeed, while cultural readings are helpful, especially in giving the student an understanding of the Hispanic tradition, neither they nor the literary masterpieces will give him the practical knowledge and vocabulary that he needs first. It is for us to address ourselves to the problem of the lack of materials in this area.

Class time then, can be organized in an efficient and interesting manner based upon the above analysis by including during each class period:

1. a review of the sound learned during the previous lesson (self-test dictation)
2. presentation of the new sound
3. practice in writing the new sound from dictation
4. listening exercise: narration on a simple topic
5. three-minute prepared talks by students

6. discussion of reading previously assigned

And at more advanced levels:

7. In class composition (10 minutes) on assigned topic, to be read aloud in class
8. In class reading to test reading comprehension
9. Oral reports by students on newspaper or magazine articles
10. Assigned reports on other outside reading.

Student response to such classes has been overwhelmingly positive. Evaluations indicate that they feel confident that they have in fact learned a valuable skill and in doing so have realized that being bilingual is indeed an asset. Many have commented that they feel that aims such as becoming a bilingual chemist, or secretary, or what-have-your, are actually possible. For the first time they see the Spanish language as a marketable commodity and not something to deny,or even worse, forget.

At a time when we are concerned about declining enrollments in foreign languages, let us not waste those who may in fact preserve within the United States the beauty of Spanish by quibbling over lexical items and insignificant differences. Let us simply teach the student what he needs and what he can use.